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ABSTRACT

Two New York City elementary schools were studied in depth to determine what school factors influenced reading achievement. Both schools, one high achieving and one low achieving, had half their student populations receiving welfare and had consistently high or low reading achievement scores. Findings showed that (1) differences in student performance seemed to be attributed to factors under the schools' control; (2) administrative behavior appeared to have a significant impact on school effectiveness; (3) the more effective school was led by an administrative team which provided a good balance between management and instructional skills; (4) the administrative team in the more effective school had developed and implemented a plan for dealing with the reading problem; (5) classroom reading instruction did not appear to differ between the two schools; (6) many professional personnel in the less effective school attributed children's reading problems to nonschool factors and were pessimistic about their ability to have an impact; and (7) children responded to unstimulating learning experiences predictably (they were apathetic, disruptive, or absent). (HOD)

STATE OF NEW YORK

OFFICE OF EDUCATION PERFORMANCE REVIEW

# SCHOOL FACTORS INFLUENCING READING ACHIEVEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TWO INNER CITY SCHOOLS

MARCH 1974

# FOREWORD

We gratefully acknowledge the guidance and assistance of the following individuals and organizations who provided their talents and time, without compensation, to design and carry out this study:

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## SUMMARY

Throughout New York State, many elementary schools, particularly those in inner cities, are not succeeding in teaching a large number of their pupils to read. Forty-two percent of third grade public school pupils in New York City cannot read at the acceptable competency level set by the State Education Department.* By the sixth grade, 48 percent of New York City children read below the acceptable competency level.*

A number of significant research studies have pointed out that many of the major determinants of student achievement levels are factors over which the school has virtually no control (Coleman, 1966 and Jencks, 1972). Since most of these nonschool factors are associated with socioeconomic status, even the best schools serving disadvantaged children in New York City do not meet statewide achievement averages. However, some schools are more successful than others.

The Office of Education Performance Review sought to:

-- identify those factors which influence student reading achievement;

-- isolate successful policies and practices for further examination;

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* Source: "Pupil Evaluation Program Scores for New York State," Bureau of Pupil Testing, State Education Department, May 1, 1973.

-- determine if factors which appear to influence school effectiveness in selected New York City schools are valid in other areas of the State; and

-- find ways to see that successful practices are applied in schools.

Two New York City elementary schools were selected for an in-depth examination. Both schools, one high achieving and one low achieving, were selected from a group of twelve schools identified by the State Education Department as having over half their student populations receiving welfare in the form of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and as schools having consistently high or low reading achievement scores.

In order to examine school effectiveness, while minimizing the impact of social and cultural factors, the two schools selected were matched on the following characteristics:

-- median family income;

-- percentage of families on welfare;

-- pupil ethnicity;

-- percentage of pupils with second language difficulties;

-- percentage of pupils eligible for free lunches; and

-- pupil mobility

Findings

Since only two schools were studied, it is vital to view these findings as preliminary and to interpret them with

caution. However, because the two schools were examined in-depth, certain insights emerged which do not always come with a larger sample more superficially considered.

This study showed that:

-- the differences in student performance in these two schools seemed to be attributed to factors under the schools' control;

-- administrative behavior, policies and practices in the schools appeared to have a significant impact on school effectiveness;

-- the more effective inner city school was led by an administrative team which provided a good balance between both management and instructional skills;

-- the administrative team in the more effective school had developed a plan for dealing with the reading problem and had implemented the plan throughout the school;

-- classroom reading instruction did not appear to differ between the two schools since classroom teachers in both schools had problems in teaching reading and assessing pupils' reading skills;

-- many professional personnel in the less effective school attributed childrens' reading problems to nonschool factors and were pessimistic about their ability to have an impact, creating an environment in which children failed because

they were not expected to succeed. However, in the more effective school, teachers were less skeptical about their ability to have an impact on children;

-- children responded to unstimulating learning experiences predictably -- they were apathetic, disruptive or absent.

Admittedly this study has not identified all factors relating to student reading achievement. However, these preliminary findings are consistent with a significant body of other research. While more research should be encouraged, it is even more important that we begin to apply what is already known.

This study has shown that school practices have an effect on reading achievement. At the very least, the children in low achieving schools should have the opportunities available to the children of the high achieving schools. These opportunities, which do not result from higher overall expenditures, are clearly within the reach of any school today.

# I. INTRODUCTION

A major function of any elementary school is to teach children how to read. If a child does not acquire basic reading skills in his elementary school years, his future educational and occupational career will be severely affected. Throughout New York State many elementary schools, particularly those in inner cities, are not succeeding in effectively teaching a large number of their pupils to read. The latest available data showed that, although for the first time in 1972 statewide reading scores seemed to be leveling off rather than continuing their downward trend, 42 percent of New York City third grade children could not read at the acceptable competency level set by the State Education Department. By the sixth grade, 48 percent of New York City children read below the acceptable competency level.*

Within this disturbing picture there is considerable variation. While the best of those schools serving disadvantaged children in New York City do not meet statewide averages, there are still some which have greater success than others. The purpose of this study was to identify those factors which appear to contribute to reading achievement in a more successful school, and by using comparative data from a less success-

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*Source: "Pupil Evaluation Program Scores for New York State," Bureau of Pupil Testing, State Education Department, May 1, 1973.

ful school, recommendations for improvement could be offered.

It has been demonstrated many times that nonschool factors have a direct relationship to student achievement. However, these factors lie beyond the school's direct influence. Each school must work with the students it serves. Therefore, while being aware of the importance of these nonschool factors, the major concern of this study lay in those areas that the school can influence. It was for this reason that schools used in this study had similar nonschool related characteristics, i.e., student populations which are comparable in socioeconomic status, race and second language difficulty.

Extra-school factors are inevitably associated with failure in reading. Many of these, such as malnutrition, language deprivation or second language difficulties are correlated with students' socioeconomic backgrounds. Other nonschool factors such as dyslexia, emotional maladjustment or physical handicaps affect all sectors of the population. This study attempted to randomize these more general factors by controlling for those associated with socioeconomic background.

The following report is a description of an initial effort. The findings are preliminary and should be viewed as springboards for further exploration in other schools and in other school districts.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Identification of Significant Factors

A theoretical framework for the study was developed by an extensive review of the literature on reading and inner city schools. However, it was also determined that the actual observations of the study team and the opinions of experienced school personnel would contribute to the shape of the inquiry.

### B. Review of Literature

It is not altogether surprising that educational research is not consistently applied in school practice. Its sheer quantity, abstruseness, and the conflicting nature of its findings render it somewhat unusable. In 1973, the Journal of Educational Research published a review of 324 studies on reading, 101 more reviews than in 1972. Most of the research concentrated on psychological and purely pedagogical aspects of reading.

Some studies indicated that factors relating to total school environment or teacher and administrative characteristics were as influential on students' learning as specific teaching techniques. Most studies found the following factors not to be significant: class size, any specific approach to teaching reading, or age and condition of the school building. Although the review indicated that no single factor in isolation could account for instructional effectiveness, certain clusters of factors reappeared consistently: administrative characteristics, teacher characteristics,

curriculum, instructional methods, and school and classroom climate.

Different studies suggested that varying aspects of the four foregoing major categories were influential in pupil reading achievement. These aspects were incorporated into the final study design to form the basis for the observational protocols and interview guides (see Appendices A, B, C and D).

## Administrative Characteristics

Research literature on the role of administration in running educationally effective urban elementary schools is not extensive. Kiesling (1971) pointed out that "the role of management has been widely neglected in American education and, indeed, we are abysmally ignorant of the traits of a good school manager." A comprehensive survey of research done by Heim (1973) found only four studies relating student achievement to administrative characteristics. These studies examined the impact of the ratio of administrators to students. None of the four studies found a correlation between the quantity of administrators and student achievement.

Those researchers who concentrated on the quality of administration found a relationship between effective administration and pupil achievement. In Weber's study of four exemplary schools (1971), "strong leadership" was a key variable in pupil achievement in reading. All four administra-

tors had initiated the beginning reading program in the schools and were leaders of the overall reading program in the schools.

Levine (1966) maintained that "an adequate level of education in a low-income school is not likely to be attained unless its administration is vigorous and highly skilled in working to overcome the forces responsible for the abominable situations which presently exist in the large majority of inner-city schools." He stressed the need for administrators capable of exercising an unusally high order of professional leadership. Levine urged that "principals communicate to their faculties the need for teachers to provide structured and consistent learning environments for educationally disadvantaged youth."

Some educators have attempted to define or describe more exactly the qualities of effective leadership in an urban school. One study by Lutz and Evans (1968) explored how successful principals in New York City manipulate the union contract in their dealings with teachers. They found that "the use of a rule by a principal to mask his authority will reduce tension or an occurrence of punishment-centered behavior." Also, "close supervision is usually viewed by teachers as punishment-centered behavior." They caution that attention must be given to "the chasm that separates the perceptions of teachers and principals and the effect of the contract upon principal leadership." Lutz and Evans concluded that, "running a 'tight ship' is not the goal of educational administration and should not be the major

goal of the principal."

Kenneth Clark (1972) has described the effective principal: "in effective programs, the principal acts, in relation to teachers, as an educational leader, that is, he:

-- sets and implements established curriculum and performance goals;
-- has high expectations of his teachers and insists on regular diagnostic assessment of student performance;
-- helps his staff to reinforce their strengths and correct their weakness through workshops, staff development, direct supervision;
-- keeps in direct touch with classroom performance;
-- involves teachers in program planning;
-- defines roles and responsibilities clearly;
-- focuses on student performance rather than classroom control as primary."

## Teacher Characteristics

While Coleman's data (1966) showed that on the whole school factors did not seem to be major determinants of student achievement levels, "teacher characteristics accounted for more variation in standardized performance in cognitive skills than did variations in any other characteristics of the

school."

Researchers have attempted to delineate the specific characteristics of a teacher which most influence student learning. Using Coleman's data (1966) and Hanushek's (1970) doctoral thesis, Levin (1970) concluded that teachers with high verbal ability were best able to improve student achievement. Levin did a cost-effectiveness analysis and found that teacher verbal ability was the least expensive teacher quality that a school could seek. However, he also found that highly verbal teachers were often new teachers who left within three years. Levin concluded that performance criteria were more relevant for judging effectiveness than certification, education or experience.

Hanushek (1970) explored the verbal facility concept and determined that verbal ability is just a proxy for general ability or intelligence.

Doris Alstou's work (1972) concentrated on the importance of teachers' critical reading ability - a characteristic closely related to intelligence. Her study found: "(1) Younger teachers were more critical readers than older teachers; (2) as teaching experience increased, critical reading ability decreased; and (3) additional course work failed to increase critical reading ability." Intelligence was also a central characteristic in another study by Chall and Feldmann (1966). This study focused on the teacher's actual methodological role in the teaching of reading and its relationship to pupil

reading achievement. Chall and Feldmann found that the following teacher variables affected pupil achievement: "teacher competence, a thinking approach to learning, an appropriate level of difficulty of the reading lessons and a sound-symbol approach."

While most studies agree on the necessity of teacher intelligence, they conflict on the importance of other variables. For instance, from 19 school effectiveness studies reviewed by Guthrie (1970), the strongest findings related to professional staff, particularly teachers, and showed the following characteristics to be significantly associated with pupil performance: "verbal ability, experience, salary, type of academic preparation, job satisfaction, and employment status." In contrast, experience, salary and status were not found to be significant variables for minority children's achievement in a study done by Winkler (1972). He found, instead, that "the quality of the teachers' undergraduate preparation, male elementary school teachers and low teacher turnover were significant for black pupils' achievement."

Michelson (1970) explored the concept that different teacher characteristics are of unequal value to dissimilar students. He felt that recruitment, training and deployment of teachers ought to match appropriate characteristics with compatible student bodies. Michelson suggested that certification standards might be changed to meet specific requirements.

Other research studies indicate that whatever favorable

characteristics teachers may bring to their classroom, they lose after being in an inner city school for a while. Fuchs (1968) traces the demoralizing influence older teachers had on novices in Harlem schools.

B. J. Leacock's study on Teaching and Learning in City Schools (1969) showed that teachers of lower achieving classes were "characterized by their inability to build concepts through involving the children in discussion." She described these teachers as "parroting educational dicta with little understanding of what concepts are or what goals for leading a discussion might be." Her work found that new teachers virtually abandon all that they have learned in preparation for teaching and that "they start over on the basis of their own judgment and experienced teachers' judgment."

Kenneth Clark (1972) pointed to another problem in inner city schools: the high rate of teacher turnover. He found that in many of the bottom classes in New York City schools pupils had three, four, or even five different teachers during the course of a single year. Clark described a "good scholar-teacher model" as, "one who knows and is enthusiastic and is not bored. The teacher should be the embodiment of his own subject matter."

## Reading Curriculum and Instruction

Although the literature on curriculum and instruction advocates the use of various materials and techniques, its major emphasis is on the interaction between an able teacher and a student. Research generally confirms what Herbert

Kohl (1973), an astute and experienced teacher, asserted in his most recent book: "There is no reading problem. There are problem teachers and problem schools." Kohl suggested that the following are requisite conditions for children learning to read: "a person who knows how to read and is interested in sharing the skill; a non-elitist, non-competitive person; some understanding of the learning process; a belief that reading is important; a comfortable trust-filled learning context; respect for the learner's culture; patience." Since Kohl felt that children want to learn he urged an informal, eclectic approach, using anything and everything that's interesting, relevant and fun.

Goettel (1971), a reading expert, indicated that no single approach is best; rather, children learn to read by a variety of methods and materials. Morrison's (1968) research found that the use of multi-level and supplementary reading and subject area materials was important to achievement. Studies by Klosterman (1970) and Frager and Stern (1970) examined the use of tutors in reading. Both showed that children who received tutoring did better than those who did not. Extensive pupil evaluation in which the child received feedback about his performance was an important feature in improving pupils' reading achievement in Froelichs' (1969) study. Clark and Walberg (1969) showed that the giving of praise when praise was due increased pupil achievement. Herbert J. Kiesling's study for Rand Corporation (1972) found that "the more minutes of instruction the pupil receives,

the more he learns and instructional specialists are likely to be more effective in teaching reading than other teaching personnel."

In teaching inner city and minority group children to read, Froelich, Blitzer and Greenberg (1967) found that a specialized teacher training program and extensive pupil evaluation were key factors. Special training for inner city teachers seems important for various reasons. Teachers sometimes alter their behavior, depending on where they teach. Johns (1972), for example, found that "suburban students were read to more often by their teachers and that these students liked their teachers to read to them more often than did students from inner city schools."

An experimental study conducted by James Fleming (1970) demonstrated that "many teachers tend to confuse norms of speaking with such reading performance variables as word recognition and comprehension." Teachers, in other words, confuse black or Hispanic dialect differences with reading ability.

Jane Torney (1973) pointed out that "the main impact of the Afro-American dialect on education has not been its structural differences from standard English, but its function as a lower status stigma." Frequently black children feel that everything they say is "wrong", which can cause alienation from the teacher and the culture the teacher represents--including reading.

Research conducted by Frank Smith (1973) showed "the key factors of reading lie in the child and in his interactions with information-providing adults, rather than in the particular materials used." In agreement with Kohl, Smith asserted: "the child is already programmed to learn to read and he needs written language that is both interesting and comprehensible and teachers who understand language-learning and who appreciate his competence as a language learner."

## School and Classroom Climate

The literature on school and classroom climate reiterates consistently the importance of the expectational level a school holds for its students. Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) basic study on the significance of a teacher's expectations for his students demonstrated the power of the "self-fulfilling prophecy" in which students became what significant others in their lives expected them to become.

Leacock (1969) noted in her studies in New York City schools that low expectations for children, coupled with a lack of challenge in the classroom were damaging. Her study found that lower standards were set for achievement and behavior in low achieving schools. Leacock maintained that "demoralized schools have lower success in teaching because the teacher-student relationship has degenerated into a direct pitched battle."

Brookover (1965), in examining variations in student performance, also found that "some of the variance in performance

is due to the expectations for competence held by the teachers and students for high-achieving students as compared to low-achieving students."

In a later study, Brookover, et. al., (1973) undertook research on social psychological climates in high and low achieving elementary schools. Their work suggested that the following school climate variables have an effect on student achievement: students' sense of futility and the expectations that a student feels are held for him.

The general learning environment is identified by some researchers (Walberg, 1970, Anderson, 1971, and Welch, 1969) as being crucial to an understanding of school effectiveness. Walberg (1970) reported that much of the variability in student performance is "attributable to the aptitude of the learner and the environment of learning, leaving only a small part to be accounted for by instructional variables."

Martin Deutsch (Clark, 1972) described the following three criteria as being essential to a good learning environment: "it should be responsive, rewarding, and intrinsically motivating."

George Weber's (1971) examination of four successful inner city schools identified good atmosphere and high expectations as contributing to pupil success in reading. Weber concluded that "order, a sense of purpose, relative quiet, and pleasure in learning played a role in the achievements of the students."

Other research points out that city schools overemphasize the maintenance of order. "Educational ideologies hold that the maintenance of discipline should be a means to academic learning and not an end in itself," said Leacock (1969). However, in the classrooms she studied, children came to see discipline and "proper" behavior as the single salient gauge for teacher approval or disapproval. In another study Levy (1970) found "that in many classrooms with low-income children, the primary objective of the teacher is the socialization of obedience behavior rather than any type of substantive learning." Smith (1968) also spoke of highly controlled classroom settings which had a "deceptively educational" look. In fact, busy work had been assigned as a control mechanism.

Glasser (1969) has stressed the impact that success and failure has on children. He described the process of sorting children by categories of "winners and losers" which begins in elementary school. A climate which consistently communicates to a child that he is important and worthy will meet the child's basic need to find success. Glasser said, "the failure of most schools in teaching reading is that they don't give the kids enough reason to want to read."

The improvement of the school environment is considered by many educators to be as important as any other changes in school curriculum and instruction. Coleman (1966) urged that "in order to effect fundamental changes in schools, the educator must modify the social environment of the school

as well as the content of study and the techniques of teaching."

C. Selection of Schools

Evidence of the importance of the socioeconomic background of students suggests that schools teaching one type of student population can be measured only against other schools with similar student populations. Furthermore, since the purpose of this study was to determine educational factors under the school's control, student characteristics had to be defined and held as constant as possible. Therefore, the selection of schools to be observed was determined by a set of socioeconomic and student background factors as well as by reading achievement as measured by standardized test scores.

Two schools were selected for the study; the schools were selected from a total population of twelve New York City elementary schools identified by the State Education Department as those having high or low reading achievement scores among schools serving low socioeconomic students.

The study done by the State Education Department* analyzed the longitudinal consistency of scores on both the Pupil Evaluation Program tests and the Metropolitan Achievement

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* "That All May Learn: A Study of Educational and Environmental Conditions in New York City Elementary Schools in Districts Which Differ in Student Reading Achievement." Albany: The State Education Department, November 1973.

Tests over a three year period (1970, 1971 and 1972). After identifying these twelve schools, the State Education Department sent a team of educational evaluators to visit each of these schools for one day during the spring of 1973. The observations and findings of the preliminary study showed that teachers in higher achieving schools had: "better rapport with students; exercised more classroom control; engaged in more extensive lesson preparation, taught reading at a level appropriate for students; regrouped students more; and used more materials in the reading program. Leadership in reading instruction was more forceful and positive in the higher achieving schools."

Since many people are suspicious of using test scores as the sole criteria for selecting high and low achieving schools, the observations from the foregoing study were also used to verify the basis for selecting one successful and one less successful school in the study. The current study was carried out over a two and one-half month period. The study team was composed of educators with a great deal of experience in New York City schools. They were selected from different universities in New York City and from different disciplines in order to lend varying perspectives and specific expertise in the areas of concern. The team was selected to assist in obtaining realistic appraisals of school situations, practices observed and interview responses.

Over half of the students in the high achieving school (School A) were reading at or above the acceptable competency

Table 1

OFFICE OF EDUCATION PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Student and School Characteristics
1972-73 School Year*

| Characteristics | School A (High Achieving) | School B (Low Achieving) |
|---|---|---|
| School Population Receiving Aid-to-Families-With-Dependent Children | 91-100% | 81-90% |
| Hispanic Pupils | 54% | 44% |
| Black Pupils | 44% | 44% |
| Other Pupils | 2% | 12% |
| Pupil Transiency | 49% | 59% |
| Pupils Eligible For Free Lunch | 99% | 90% |
| Pupils With Severe Language Difficulty | 15% | 21% |
| Pupils With Moderate Language Difficulty | 10% | 9% |
| Pupils With No Language Difficulty | 75% | 70% |
| Median Family Income | $7,800 | $8,031 |
| School Type | K-6 | K-6 |
| School Enrollment | 1,295 | 913 |
| School Building Utilization Factor | 103% | 76% |

* Data Source: Bureau of Educational Evaluation, New York City Board of Education.

level for their grades as measured by the Pupil Evaluation Program tests. On the Metropolitan Achievement Tests, 25 percent of the students were reading at or above grade level on national norms.

To provide clarification and contrast for observations made of the more successful school, another school (School B) with a similar student population was selected on the basis of its comparatively low test results. Only 16 percent of the students in School B were reading at or above the State's acceptable competency level for their grades. On the Metropolitan Achievement Tests, ten percent of the students were reading at or above grade level on national norms.

To assure the meaningfulness of the comparison, the student populations of the two schools were matched as closely as possible. Median family income, percentage of families on welfare, pupil ethnicity, percentage of pupils with second language difficulties, percentage of pupils eligible for free lunches, and pupil mobility were used as matching criteria. The schools were also similar in size, enrollment, age of building and space utilization. Table 1 provides the data for the two schools. Because of the high incidence of poverty and reading retardation in their student populations, both schools are designated by the New York City Board of Education as "Special Service Schools" and Title I schools.

D. Data Collection

A case study approach was adopted for the study of the

the two schools. The research was based on observations and interviews. Qualitative rather than quantitative techniques were emphasized. The opinions of school personnel, community members, and students were elicited both formally and informally. School processes and climate were assessed through frequent observations.

Prior to the observations and interviews, two staff members from the Office of Education Performance Review, who had overall responsibility for the study, met with members of the study team individually to explain the nature of the project and to pinpoint the areas of investigation. This was followed by a conference of all team members where purposes of the observations, visits and interviews were crystallized, and where the team agreed on their roles, and the procedures and practices to be followed.

E. Interviews and Classroom Observations

In gathering data for this study, the team conducted interviews and/or observations with the following persons listed in Table 2.

Table 2

School and District Personnel Interviewed

| Position Title | Number |
|---|---|
| District Superintendent | 2 |
| District Reading Coordinator | 2 |
| Bilingual Specialist | 2 |
| Principal | 2 |
| Assistant Principal | 6 |
| Classroom Teacher | 25 |

Formal classroom observations were carried out in the second, fourth and sixth grades in both schools, in addition to informal observations of other classrooms and programs. Informal interviews were held with children and parents. Grades two, four and six were selected for observing reading instruction in each elementary school, since these grades represented an early point, a mid-point, and the culmination point in the formal reading program.

F. Testing

The standardized tests which the State Education Department and New York City Board of Education require elementary children to take, (the Pupil Evaluation Program tests and the Metropolitan Achievement Tests respectively) were universally criticized by City school personnel. They were considered to be invalid because they were reported to be culturally and linguistically biased to the detriment of City youngsters. Their reliability was questioned because schools follow different policies for granting student exemptions, preparing students for testing and administering the tests.

Because of the seriousness of these criticisms, it was decided to administer informal, textbook reading tests. These tests were used to establish the functional reading levels in the two schools, and to substantiate the initial premise that School A was more effective in teaching reading than School B. Establishing the reading levels of the students in the two schools also helped in the evaluation of the appro-

priateness of classroom methods and materials.

A total sample of 90 children in grades two, four and six was selected for testing. Since the children in both of these schools were homogeneously grouped on the basis of standardized reading tests and teacher recommendations, a top class, a middle class, and a bottom class were chosen from each of the three grades. Class lists were compiled for each of the 18 classes and five children from each class were selected at random for testing. The criterion for selecting the 90 children was that the children had been continuously enrolled in that school for at least two years. A total of 46 boys and 44 girls were tested.

Two textbook tests were used: "The Bank Street Informal Reader Placement Test," which tested functional reading levels from preprimer through third grade, and the "MacMillan Textbook Test," which tested reading abilities from fourth grade through sixth grade. The tests yielded three measurements for each child: (1) a functional reading level, (2) a word recognition score, and (3) a comprehension score. Table 3 presents the results obtained from testing the children in both schools.

Of those tested, 40 percent of the children in School A were reading at or above grade level compared to 20 percent for School B. The results indicate that School A fared better than School B on the functional reading measure at each of the three grade levels, i.e., School A had a higher percentage of students reading at or above grade level and a lower percentage of students reading two or more levels below grade.

Table 3

OFFICE OF EDUCATION PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Functional Reading Levels of Pupils
Tested in Both Schools

| Actual Grade Placement Of Pupils | | Pupils Reading at or Above Grade Level | | Pupils Reading One Level Below Grade | | Pupils Reading Two or More Levels Below Grade | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | |
| Second Grade | School A | 6 | 40% | 0 | 0% | 9 | 60% | 15 |
| | School B | 2 | 13 | 1 | 7 | 12 | 80 | 15 |
| Fourth Grade | School A | 8 | 53 | 3 | 20 | 4 | 27 | 15 |
| | School B | 5 | 33 | 4 | 27 | 6 | 40 | 15 |
| Sixth Grade | School A | 4 | 27 | 1 | 7 | 10 | 66 | 15 |
| | School B | 2 | 13 | 2 | 13 | 11 | 74 | 15 |
| TOTAL | School A | 18 | 40 | 4 | 9 | 23 | 51 | 45 |
| | School B | 9 | 20 | 7 | 15 | 29 | 65 | 45 |

A statistical study was made of the distribution of scores earned by the students in the two schools. The test commonly used to determine whether the distribution of the scores is so dissimilar that a very low probability exists that they occurred merely by chance is the Kolmogorov Smirnov Two-Sample Test. The test statistic, D, is the maximum difference between the cumulative frequency distribution of test scores. The exact probabilities for D being equal or greater than observed have been computed and published in the statistical literature. To determine if the distribution of raw scores is statistically significant, one simply computes D and consults these tables to determine its probability of occuring by chance.

Table 4

Comparison of Children's Functional Reading Level Scores in the Schools

| Actual Grade Placement Of Pupils | D | Level of Significance |
|---|---|---|
| Second Grade N=30 | 3 | NS* |
| Fourth Grade N=30 | 7 | $<.05$** |
| Sixth Grade N=30 | 7 | $<.05$** |

* Not significant

** Significant at $<.05$ level

Table 4 presents the findings of the statistical analysis of the functional reading level scores for the three grades tested in both schools. No significant differences were found between second graders. This supports the contention that the school populations are initially comparable. It also suggests that nonschool influences, early school experiences, and initial reading levels are not significantly different. However, in both fourth and sixth grades, students in School A had statistically significant higher functional reading levels than students in School B. The conclusion is that School A is doing significantly better than School B in teaching similar populations of pupils to read, a fact which confirms the earlier premise underlying the selection of schools.

These findings become even more revealing since the children in School B had an advantage over the children in School A because they had some familiarity with the Bank Street Readers, a fact which could have artificially inflated their scores. Furthermore, fourth grade high achievers in School A are sent to a special class for Intellectually Gifted Children (IGC) in another school in that district. There is no such policy followed in School B and the high achievers remain in that school through sixth grade.

In order to compare Schools A and B according to the pupils' test scores on word recognition and comprehension, the Mann-Whitney U Test was used. The results of this analysis for fourth grade appear in Table 5. There were no statistically

significant differences on these measures at the sixth grade level, but the averages were higher in School A for both word recognition and comprehension.

Table 5

Results Obtained on the Mann-Whitney U Test
Between Fourth Grade Pupils in School A and School B

| Skill Area | Z | Level of Significance |
|---|---|---|
| Reading Comprehension | 1.80 | $<.03$* |
| Word Recognition | 1.61 | $<.05$** |

* Significant at $<.03$ level

** Significant at $<.05$ level

Table 5 indicates that on both measures of reading skills, i.e., word recognition and comprehension, the pupils' scores were significantly different. Students in School A achieved higher scores than students in School B. The probability of these differences being due to chance is extremely low. Therefore, the differences should be attributed to the impact that the school is having.

On all three comparisons (functional reading levels, word recognition and comprehension) pupils in School A con-

sistently outperformed students in School B, especially at the fourth grade level. Although the children are entering these two schools with similar deficiencies (see Table 3) School A is having greater success with inner city children than School B.

## III. FINDINGS

As noted in the chapter on methodology in this report, a case study approach was selected for the examination of the two schools. Since only a microcosm of the educational system was studied (two schools) the approach used in the collection of the data was qualitative rather than quantitative. No attempt has been made to affix percentages or use other statistics unless, as in the case of some of the teacher data, the size of the group was sufficiently large to warrant the use of statistics. In most cases, quantitative data would convey an impression of numerical accuracy that is inappropriative for the scope of this study. Instead, the observers' insights are discussed in qualitative terms in hopes of providing a more meaningful and accurate picture.

Since only two schools were studied, it is vital to view these findings as preliminary and to interpret them with caution. However, since the two schools were examined in depth, certain insights have emerged which do not always come with a larger sample more superficially considered.

A. Overview of Schools

School A (High Achieving)

School A and the low income housing project which was its major source of students first opened their doors 12 years ago. The school was surrounded on three sides by the drab, but well maintained brick buildings of the project. Although the school received students from tenements beyond the bounds of the project, its environment was defined by the project. Commercial activities were two blocks away.

Surrounded by high iron gates, the school sits on a slight promontory and appears impregnable. It is a three story brick building, unimaginative and ugly as only a city school can be. The main entrance to the school is not inviting, but clearly is an open door. The windows of the school were intact, and though the school was not totally free from vandalism, it did not appear to be under frequent attack.

The population of the school was quite evenly divided between black and Puerto Rican children. (For exact figures see Table 1 on page 17.) Nearly all of the students' families were receiving welfare. The student mobility rate was 49 percent in 1972. The school reportedly enjoyed a good reputation with the local population and some parents who moved away still tried to keep their children enrolled there. In 1972 it had the unusually high attendance rate of 91 percent.

School A was overcrowded, housing 1,381 students in

the fall of 1973. But the inside of the school did not convey the sense of having too many children. Its halls and classrooms were consistently well kept during the two and one-half months of observation. The hall displays were timely, modest and representative of student work. Throughout the school there was a sense of quiet pride.

School B (Low Achieving)

School B is located in the midst of a low income neighborhood undergoing transition. The housing available in the area is composed of two and three story tenement buildings and some new high rise, low income housing projects. In various stages of completion, the projects, rising out of rubble, surrounded the school on three sides, dwarfing it.

School B is a three story, eleven year old brick building. Its design varies slightly from other contemporary school buildings in the City in that it was a perfect square with entrances at each of its corners; these entrances caused extraordinary security problems for the school's staff. Only one door was left unlocked. The building was set close to the street, and despite the black iron grating which encased the ground level windows, only two had survived vandals' rocks. School B's playground, which it shared with the community, served as the hangout for truants from the local junior high school. The principal identified the junior high school as the source of most of the vandalism threatening School B.

The school, built for 1,200 students, housed 1,045 in grades kindergarten through sixth in the fall of 1973. Several blocks away a new elementary school was under construction, but the new housing projects would be completed before the school, so that School B anticipated the possibility of having to go on double session. On the opening day of school this fall, School B received 150 new children, which was many more than it had anticipated.

School B was fairly evenly divided between black and Puerto Rican children, but it had a small white population as well. (See Table 1 on page 17 for exact figures.) Most of the families in the neighborhood were receiving welfare. The student mobility rate for 1972 was 59 percent, and the reported attendance rate was 83 percent. Tardiness, a chronic problem in School B, also cut into regular attendance. Many children came to school an hour late each day.

The interior of the school, despite its brightly tiled walls, had "a gray and seedy quality," as if people had ceased caring about it. The polish on the floors and the attractive hall displays, observed on an initial visit, soon vanished into disrepair.

B. Administrative Characteristics

An effort was made to compare administrative characteristics and practices between the two schools with a view towards explaining the difference in performance between the schools. Therefore, the similarities and differences between the

administrative characteristics and practices have been delineated in this section.

1. Similarities Between the Schools

Training and Experience

The principals in both schools were white males whose prior teaching experience and formal educational preparation had been on the secondary school level. Each man stressed the management aspects of the elementary school operation. Principal A identified "running a viable educational institution" as his foremost responsibility. By this he said he meant making certain that staff were fulfilling their responsibilities, and trying to create an atmosphere in which learning could occur.

Principal B found the management burdens of his job extremely heavy. He was attempting to "stabilize the school through strong management control." He defined this as exerting greater power over pupils, staff and parents.

Neither man had a background in teaching reading nor did the majority of their respective staff members identify them as educational leaders.

Superintendent Stability

Each principal was reporting to a relatively new district superintendent. Superintendent A had been in charge of the district for eight months while Superintendent B had been in charge of his district for eighteen months.

2. Differences Between the Schools

Stability of Leadership

Stability of administrative leadership characterized School A. Principal A had been there since the school opened 12 years ago. One teacher described the impact of this accordingly: "he invests the school with a sense of predictability, discipline and security." Not only did the principal's tenure have a stabilizing impact on School A, the high achieving school, but a number of the administrative policies he created were designed to increase staff stability.

The recruitment techniques that Principal A uses in hiring new teachers reflect the stress that he places on maintaining staff stability. Several of the teachers had done their student teaching in the school prior to joining the staff. Many of the paraprofessionals had worked in the school for over four years and one paraprofessional completed the necessary college work, obtained a teaching license and now has joined the teaching staff. Staff members have actively recruited other staff members to work there. In fact, one of the assistant principals pointed out that sisters teach in the school, a father and son team are teachers in the school, and a school secretary has a daughter on the teaching staff.

By his own work record, commitment to the job and his administrative policies Principal A has set a priority on creating a stable atmosphere in this inner city school. His efforts have been successful in that teacher turnover is low, with only three teachers leaving during the 1972-73

school year. Two teachers left on maternity leave and one left because her family relocated in another area of the country.

On the other hand, instability of administrative leadership was the hallmark of School B. Although Principal B had worked in the district for 15 years, his tenure as principal had been both brief and interrupted. Twice in the last five years he had been promoted from assistant principal to acting principal to replace principals who left. While the study was underway District B was engaged in the process of selecting a permanent principal. Principal B attributed many of his problems in the school to numerous shifts in leadership. Perhaps due to his own job insecurity, Principal B could not describe any administrative policies he had designed to increase stability within the school.

In interviews, a number of the teachers in School B reported a desire to teach elsewhere, but the conditions of the United Federation of Teachers' contract restricting the number of transfers and the tight job market have brought a modicum of apparent staff stability to School B. Thus the staff stability was not due to the principal's practices; people remained not because of choice but out of necessity.

Staff Supervision and Support

Principal A stressed that he was not the type "to breathe down the neck of his staff," but the study team observed throughout the two and one-half month period that he was quietly omnipresent in the school. In addition

to the periodic formal observations of his staff, Principal A used a variety of informal observational techniques. He delivered paychecks to the teachers in their classrooms, he ate lunch daily with the teachers, and he delegated authority to his three assistant principals for staff supervision and support. Since Principal A lacked formal preparation in elementary school curricula, he had astutely selected three assistant principals who had special elementary school instructional skills. In doing this it was evident that Principal A recognized the nature and diversity of leadership since he identified his assistant principals as leaders and encouraged them to show their individual strengths.

In interviews, teachers reported that they could rely on members of the administrative team in School A for instructional support and assistance. Teachers eported that they felt School A was well run and a good place in which to work. Additionally, a number of teachers asserted that they felt well insulated both from community and bureaucratic problems.

The administrative team of School A maintained a set of schoolwide practices which affected the reading program. Some of the impetus for this had come from the district level and some had come from the school's administrators. One assistant principal was in charge of the reading improvement efforts for the school. Good communication between the staff and the administration appeared to further facilitate a coordinated approach. All teachers who were observed followed

a plan which included writing on the board what the day's lesson was, what vocabulary words were to be learned, and what the homework was for the day. All teachers, before standardized tests were to be administered, prepared the students for test taking. Work done on one grade level was not repeated on the next grade level in School A.

The foregoing characteristics were not true in the low achieving school (School B). Although the required formal observations were done by the administrative staff, there was not a consistent pattern of informal observational practices used by the administrative staff. Classroom teachers said that crises involving pupils and parents strained relationships between the administrators and teaching staff so a number of teachers felt threatened by supervisory visits from Principal B.

During interviews with the study team, teachers mentioned that the administrative team in School B tried to provide assistance with disciplinary problems, but since the administrators' formal training was all on the secondary school level they were unable to provide much instructional assistance. This fact appeared to be an obstacle which prevented the administrative team from developing a cohesive plan to deal with the reading problem in School B.

Community Relationships

The administration of School A communicated to the staff that parents were always welcome in the school.

It set the tone for the staff by setting aside a room to be used by parents; by permitting another room to be used by a group of people from the community for preparation for taking a high school equivalency examination; parents were free to walk throughout the school and many were observed throughout the visitation period. In addition, School A encouraged an active parents' group and teachers made some home visits. Several years ago, School A received an award for the excellence of its relationships with the community. Both the staff and the community people referred to School A as an open school.

The administration in School B was less effective in communicating both to the staff and the community that parents were welcome. This was evident in the low priority assigned to establishing effective relationships with the community. Parents were angry because the administrative staff had discontinued the prior practice of setting aside a room for their use. Teachers were not encouraged by the administration to make home visits and there was no evidence that the school was being used during the day by adults.

The Union Contract

Although both principals were bound by the rules of the United Federation of Teachers' contract, there was a distinct difference in both the administration and interpretation of the rules by the principals. Principal A was able to manipulate the union contract because of his reputation with the staff for fairness. In the sixth grade,

all classes exceeded the mandated size and the principal explained this by saying, "the staff is very understanding." Teachers frequently waived their rights to have mandated class assignments, e.g., one teacher chose to stay with the lowest fourth grade for a two-year period. There was not a high degree of hostility between the administrative team and the teachers, but rather there was a friendly, cooperative climate. In a twelve-year period, there was only one grievance in School A.

Principal B's authoritarian leadership style may have created negative sentiment among his teachers since 11 teacher grievances were brought to the district superintendent in September 1973. The lack of flexibility with which Principal B administered the rules created problems for him. His legalistic stance brought a legalistic response from the teaching staff. In School B, all classes adhered to the mandated size except for one in the fourth grade and reorganization of classes to meet with the regulations was not an unusual occurence.

Initiation and Implementation of New Programs

The administrative team in School A described to the study team the process used in the initiation and implementation of new programs. It was evident that an attempt was made to integrate various supplemental and compensatory programs with classroom work to provide a cohesive educational experience for children. For example, although both schools had recently established reading laboratories, the administra-

tions in each school had set different policies. Teachers in School A were required to remain with their classes in the lab for inservice education purposes. The result was that the teachers interviewed could describe the activities planned for students in the reading laboratory and they felt the policy set by the administration was going to increase their effectiveness in the classroom.

No such policy had been set by the administration of School B and teachers did not remain with their classes in the reading laboratory. In interviews, teachers said they wondered what work their students were doing and two laboratory reading teachers spoke about the separation of activities between their work and the efforts of the classroom teachers in reading.

C. Teacher Characteristics

The teachers in these two schools are all working with student populations characterized by high mobility, low mastery of basic skills, and a wide range of motivational levels. Since one school is having more success than the other school, an effort was made to compare differences in teacher characteristics in an attempt to explain differences in school performance.

1. Similarities Between the Schools

Training and Experience of Teachers

There was little variation between the schools when certain demographic characteristics of the faculties were compared (see Table 6). The faculties of both schools could be described as experienced and well educated.

OFFICE OF EDUCATION PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Comparison of Faculty Characteristics
Between the Schools

| Characteristics | School A<br>High Achieving | School B<br>Low Achieving |
|---|---|---|
| Male Classroom Teachers | 7% | 24% |
| Female Classroom Teachers | 93% | 76% |
| Tenured Teachers | 80% | 66% |
| Degree Status: BA | 23% | 25% |
| Degree Status: BA & 30 hours | 33% | 25% |
| Degree Status: MA | 12% | 23% |
| Degree Status: MA & 30 hours | 32% | 27% |
| Racial/Ethnic: Hispanic | 9% | 3% |
| Racial/Ethnic: Black | 11% | 3% |
| Racial/Ethnic: Other | 80% | 94% |
| Assigned to Classrooms | 71% | 59% |
| Average Age | 35 years | 35 years |
| Average Teaching Experience | 8 years | 6 years |
| Pupil/Teacher Ratio | 33/1 | 28/1 |

The average length of experience for teachers in School A was eight years compared to a six year average for School B. In School A, 77 percent of the teachers had academic training above a bachelor's degree compared to 75 percent for School B. School A had slightly more tenured teachers (80 percent) than did School B, (66 percent).

Job Commitment

The teachers in both schools outranked the students and parents of the communities they served in terms of income and level of education. In both schools, it was evident from classroom observations and interviews that the teachers' personal lives were distinct from their teaching. The majority of the faculty were alien to the communities in which they taught. With the exception of several teachers, all faculty members lived outside these communities and came from elsewhere in the five boroughs, Long Island and New Jersey. The geographic distance they traveled to the schools appeared to be a handicap because it prevented their attendance at late afternoon and evening meetings. During the observational period, it was not unusual to find both schools empty and locked by 3:15 P.M.

Only one of the 25 teachers interviewed had established any educational and personal goals for the children. However, teachers reported in interviews that they worried about their pupils and wondered what they could provide for them. The teachers in School B believed they are working "in the most difficult school in that district," to use the words

of the superintendent and the principal. Teachers in School B pointed to children's inadequacies or home factors as the cause of their teaching problems. Samples of their statements: "the family is uncooperative," "the parents don't care," "the family structure isn't stable," "the kids can't learn," "the kids aren't motivated," reveal a heavy reliance upon genetic and environmental factors to explain why School B was failing in the teaching of reading.

School A's teachers were equally frank about their lack of zeal, but their reason for stating they lacked excitement about their work was different. School A enjoyed a good reputation in the community, a fact which was reinforced to the staff by parents, the school administrators, and the district staff. The teachers had correctly inferred that their school was having more success than most inner city schools and this allowed the faculty at School A to feel somewhat satisfied.

Teachers' Reading Patterns

Since the study focused on reading, several questions were asked in the teacher interviews to determine what characteristics were typical of the teachers' personal reading patterns. The teachers interviewed reported an almost universal dislike for reading, other than for newspapers and magazines. The teachers reported that they seldom read for the purpose of professional growth unless they were enrolled in graduate courses.

Perhaps this finding is a reflection of our culture

which uses a variety of media besides the written word to communicate. However, the teachers who report a dislike for reading are still the same people devoting 90 minutes a day trying to impart the skill to their pupils and trying to inspire pupils to see reading as a valuable asset.

2. Differences Between the Schools

Staff Morale

The previous section dealing with administrative characteristics described the differences between the principals' interpretation and application of the United Federation of Teachers' contract. It is interesting that the most striking difference between the faculties of the two schools was related to the application of the union contract and the subsequent impact that this had upon staff morale.

In interviews, teachers viewed School A as "a pleasant place in which to work" which coincided with the fact that only one grievance had been filed in 12 years as compared to 18 in June 1973 in School B. The consensus expressed by the teachers was that if you liked children and enjoyed the autonomy of the classroom, you could make an interesting job for yourself. All teachers interviewed in School A reported that they were satisfied to stay in the classrooms and there was not animosity toward those teachers who obtained out-of-classroom assignments.

"A spirit of cooperation" was the phrase used by one teacher in School A to describe its faculty-staff relationship. Interviews with both teachers and administrators yielded

a number of examples which underscored this, e.g., when School A exhausted its supply of important materials, teachers raised the money needed to buy the necessary supplies. In addition, teachers reported that since expectations for them were stated by administrators they knew what to do and felt that they were working towards a common goal.

In contrast, teacher morale in School B was low. Eighteen grievances had been filed in June 1973, 11 of which reached the district superintendent during September 1973. The grievances were related to the awarding of out-of-classroom assignments by the principal, and considerable animosity was expressed by teachers who had been assigned to the classroom. A survey done by Principal B revealed that only five teachers out of a total of 63 wanted to be in the classrooms for the 1973-74 school year. Data collected in interviews explained the reason for this. Teachers in School B reported they felt overwhelmed by the task of educating the pupils, and they viewed out-of-classroom assignments as less strenuous than classroom teaching. Classroom teachers in School B indicated that they felt isolated from those staff members who had out-of-classroom assignments. Forty-one percent of the faculty in School B had out-of-classroom assignments as compared to 29 percent for School A.

Demographic Characteristics of Teachers

Both schools had predominately female teaching staffs which is not atypical for elementary schools. School B had attracted a higher percentage of male teachers

to its faculty with 24 percent in the classrooms compared to seven percent for School A. A number of the male teachers were eligible for the draft at the time of the Vietnam War and avoided it by electing to teach in a ghetto school. There was some evidence which suggested that these individuals remained in School B primarily because of the tight job market for teachers and the transfer restrictions outlined in the union contract.

Both faculties were predominately white. School A had a total of 11 percent black teachers and 9 percent Hispanic teachers compared to a total of 3 percent black and 3 percent Hispanic for School B.

D. Reading Curriculum and Instructional Methods

In an attempt to determine why one school was having greater success than the other in teaching reading, observers visited a representative sample of classrooms from the second, fourth and sixth grades. The similarities and differences are described in this section.

1. Similarities Between the Schools

Classroom Organization and Management

The United Federation of Teachers' contract specifies that elementary school children in New York City will be homogeneously grouped in classes according to scores on standardized reading tests; hence, both schools followed the practice of forming classes on the basis of reading scores and teacher recommendations. Teachers and administrators

were divided in their responses when queried if ability grouping is a positive or negative force on teachers and pupils or whether homogeneity created more efficient instruction.

The instructional style used by the teachers observed was whole group instruction. In some instances, teachers divided their classes into three smaller groups for reading instruction. Observers noted that teachers in both schools had difficulty with the subgrouping of children and in the individualization of instruction since in a number of instances children were treated as if their reading skills were the same. For example, only one teacher attempted to respond to the individual differences of her pupils by taking notes on children's performance and giving individualized assignments. Most evaluations of pupil progress were carried out as a group process, i.e., teachers checked work pupils had completed in their workbooks or on worksheets.

Classrooms in both schools were characterized by a high level of teacher direction and structure. It was evident from the observations that the teachers dominated the learning situation. One outcome was that, in some classrooms children had periods of nonactivity which resulted in children either docilely accepting inactivity or else causing disciplinary problems. There was little evidence of preparing the children for independent action or self-directed learning. The predominate characteristic of the classrooms was passive learning since teachers were doing most of the talking.

## The Quality of Reading Instruction

The schools were remarkably similar in the type of reading instruction that they offered. In both schools much classroom time was used for pupil recitation or checking completed work. Children's responses were judged by the teachers to be either correct or incorrect, but almost never did the observers see a teacher using a child's response as a basis for explanation or comment. Observational data showed that this technique produced little interchange between teachers and children and almost no interchange among pupils. Children were seldom required to justify their answers, conceptualize, or use any higher order skills. In fact, teachers seemed to talk down to their students and thus conveyed a feeling of holding low expectations of their pupils.

## Teacher Competency

A wide range of competencies in teaching performance was observed by the study team. Each school had several teachers who were described by the observers as "above average" in performance. Most of the 18 teachers observed were described as "average" and several were rated as "below average." However, it could not be said that one school had more than its share of either superior or unsatisfactory teachers.

There was little evidence in the classes observed that the majority of the teachers understood the developmental sequence of reading, or how to teach, reinforce, or assess knowledge of reading skills. For example, teachers made

few generalizations about reading skills and only a few teachers attempted to relate one day's work to the next.

In interviews, a number of teachers expressed concern about deficiencies in the teacher preparation process where they felt that educational theory was not translated into concrete practices which they could use in their classrooms. Adherence to traditional methods may suggest that teachers are apparently convinced that the way they have been taught is the most appropriate method for teaching others, or that they are unsure about other methods.

Both classroom observations and interviews with administrators underscored a concern with the problem of recruitment and retention of competent teachers. One member of the administrative team described his frustration in his statement, "the principal is held accountable, but he hasn't the authority he needs to do the job." By this he meant that principals have relatively little power over faculty with respect to promotion, dismissal and compensation of professional staff. Under these conditions it is difficult to reward competence or to correct incompetence.

Availability of Resources for Teaching Reading

Both schools were well equipped with a wide variety of supplemental reading materials and library books. Neither school could be described as poverty stricken in terms of the availability of resources for teaching. The bookrooms and classrooms of these schools revealed that

the selling of approaches to the teaching of reading appears to be a profitable business. There was a wealth of workbooks, teachers' manuals, games and other printed materials. Some of these approaches have been tried and discarded while others were still in use. Each school was concerned with the importance of using relevant reading materials, which meant a strong focus on stories dealing with urban life and decreased emphasis on children's classics and myths.

Neither school used audio-visual aids to a great extent. One teacher used a filmstrip projector during the reading lesson and two out-of-classroom teachers were attempting to use television to teach reading. However, overall there was little use of audio-visual equipment.

2. Differences Between the Schools

The Totality of the Educational Experience

The schools differed dramatically in terms of how they planned the children's total educational experience. This was evident by examining several aspects of their programs: compensatory education, the assignment and use of paraprofessionals, and the roles of cluster teachers in the schools.*

Both schools have a variety of compensatory educational programs which have been funded by the Federal and State governments for the purpose of narrowing the gap between

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* New York City provides additional teachers in inner city schools to assist classroom teachers.

the academic performance of middle class children and lower class children. The basic goal of these programs, established by moneys available through ESEA, Title I and State Urban Education grants, was the same although the exact nature of the programs varied between the schools. Interviews with the administrators and teachers in the schools revealed a difference in the effort made to integrate a new compensatory program when each started a reading laboratory. School A made an overt attempt to avoid having this supplemental reading experience become fragmentary and compartmentalized from classroom work, while School B did not. As a result, School B's personnel described instances of friction between the classroom and laboratory teachers because of administrative failure to coordinate classroom teaching with supplemental teaching.

The assignment and use of paraprofessionals varied between the schools. In School A, paraprofessionals remained in one classroom with one teacher on a fulltime basis. Both the district and school personnel expressed their concern about State guidelines which do not support this practice. However, since it made educational sense to local staff they followed that course of action. This resulted in the teacher and the paraprofessional establishing a team relationship which reportedly provided a sense of continuity for both. Administrators in School A said that several paraprofessionals had worked with the same teacher for more than four years. However, in School B the majority of the paraprofessionals

were assigned to several classrooms for one hour a day. The activities of all paraprofessionals were organized by a faculty member who did not have a classroom assignment. These paraprofessionals primarily provided vocabulary drills with individual students. Their work appeared to lack the coordination which was observed in that of the paraprofessionals in School A; teachers and students felt they had a weak relationship with the paraprofessionals.

The roles of cluster teachers in the schools also varied. School B enjoyed a higher ratio of cluster teachers to classroom teachers, a fact which had the potential of creating a better learning environment because of the enrichment these individuals could provide to classroom teachers. However, the undefined criteria used for their selection produced problems both in interpersonal relationships and the coordination of programs. In School B, classroom teachers interviewed felt that the cluster teacher selection process was arbitrary and that some staff were placed in jobs without reference to their suitability. Therefore, in several instances classroom teachers and cluster teachers appeared to be competitors rather than partners. This situation did not exist in School A, where there was evidence of coordination and planning between the two groups of teachers.

Pupil/Teacher Ratios

Although School A had a larger enrollment than School B, it had fewer teachers. This produced a lower pupil/classroom teacher ratio in School B and smaller classes

(see Table 6). The ratio was 33/1 for School A and 28/1 for School B. In spite of this, pupil achievement however, was lower in School B than it was in the other school. Smaller class size, an average of five fewer students per class, had not resulted in greater teacher morale in School B nor had it produced any differences in classroom instructional techniques. The teachers in School B did not use a different teaching style or different methods of working with children even though the class size was smaller than School A's.

Administrative Involvement in Curriculum and Instruction

An examination of the roles of the members of the two administrative teams revealed a difference between the two schools with respect to the degree of administrative involvement in curriculum and instruction. Principal A explained the district plan and the school plan for reading improvement which established a number of practices. One assistant principal in School A had been placed in charge of the school-wide effort to improve children's reading skills. Her work had resulted in the establishment of a special class for children with learning problems and the creation of an inservice education course for teachers in reading techniques.

Observations in the classrooms of School A revealed that there was a schoolwide plan for the teaching of reading since there were certain constants like a daily plan, written questions for reading, and sequential reading materials. Teachers knew they were expected to focus on teaching children

to read. In interviews they identified the assistant principal as the educational leader of School A.

Conversely in School B it was difficult to find evidence of any plan for the teaching of reading. Nor did there appear to be a significant administrative involvement in the school's reading program. No member of the administrative team had a background in reading, which appeared to be a severe handicap in providing instructional leadership. The lack of meaningful administrative involvement may have been the factor responsible for the fragmented approach used by School B.

Other policies set by the administrations in each of the schools also had an impact on efforts in the classrooms. Although the time allotted for the teaching of reading did not differ between the schools (each school said it set aside 90 minutes daily) the scheduling methods were quite different. School B's schedule provided two 45 minute segments of time for formal instruction in reading. However, one of these two periods often began at 8:40 A.M. which seemed inappropriate to the study team since both teachers and pupils were still arriving at this time. In addition, the endemic problems of student tardiness, pointed out by all members of the staff, compounded the instructional problem for the teachers.

The administration of School A had established a schedule for reading using three time blocks of 30 minutes each. The staff in School A and the study team noted that this took into account children's attention span and also

provided an organizational period in the classrooms since reading instruction was never offered before 9:00 A.M.

Pupil Testing and Evaluation in Reading

Pupils in both schools are required, by the State and the City, to take standardized norm-referenced reading achievement tests. Administrators and teachers in both schools universally criticized the adequacy with which these tests measure pupils' reading abilities. However, the concern of the administrators and the teachers was channeled into fruitful action in School A.

School A's philosophy was to prepare children to take the tests within the testing guidelines set by the Board of Education and the State. The administrative staff at School A was convinced that results obtained by their school on the Pupil Evaluation Program tests were important to the State Education Department even though their district and school did not value PEP results highly. The district and school personnel understood that PEP results are frequently seen, at the State level, not as an index of the needs of disadvantaged children, but rather as a report card on districts and schools. While joining District B and School B in decrying the unfairness of this interpretation, School A had instituted a set of schoolwide practices to cope with these realities.

Administrators and teachers in School A felt that in many instances students were unfamiliar with testing procedures and reacted with fear or casualness. Thus, administrators and teachers developed a plan which provided inservice training

for teachers on testing, stressed the importance of testing, and familiarized pupils with the act of taking standardized reading achievement tests. However, they did not teach to the tests or overemphasize test scores.

E. School, Classroom and Community Climate

An effort was made to examine the institutional or social climate variables in the two schools in order to explain differences in reading achievement.

1. Similarities Between the Schools

Community Environment

Each school found it necessary to have security guards in the schools because of their surrounding neighborhoods, although it was evident from the exterior of the schools and interview data that School B had more problems with vandalism than did School A. Observations by the study team revealed that each school had problem children and problem parents, but School A was able to foresee crises before they happened. By anticipating problems the administrative team of School A often avoided having to take a reactive attitude.

Expectations for Pupils

The expectations that teachers held for their students were somewhat similar in the two schools. Both classroom observations and interviews with teachers revealed that they relied upon nonschool factors to explain children's reading problems. However, School A did not as consistently

blame the pupils or parents as did the personnel in School B. Only one teacher in School B said that children's reading problems were caused by the ineffectiveness of the school. All other teachers interviewed said they felt the problems were related to the family and the neighborhood. Thus, while neither school evinced high expectations for the children, the staff in School B was much more skeptical about its ability to have an impact.

There was a considerable difference in the expectations held for pupils between the administrative teams of the schools. Administrators in School B stressed a custodial rather than an instructional function. This was evident in the top priority that was placed on control and discipline. It is also significant that although the study team tested several gifted children in School B, there was no special provision made for them. School A had a policy whereby gifted children were sent to another school in that district where special programs were offered for unusually bright children. The fact that School B had no policy for gifted children underscores the low expectations that it appeared to hold for pupils.

2. Differences Between the Schools

Community Climate

School A had effectively established open channels of communication between the staff and the community. Interviews with both staff and parents made it clear that the community was expected and encouraged to participate in the functions of the school.

Parents said that the executive board of the parents' group met on a weekly basis. In addition to fund-raising activities, which were held to purchase gym clothing for needy children and to sponsor a party for graduating sixth graders, the parents raised funds to send fifth and sixth graders with their parents and teachers on an annual trip. Approximately twelve parent volunteer tutors were recruited through the efforts of the administrative staff and the parents to work in the school during the 1972-73 school year.

Community people attending a high school equivalency class said the school was helping them to obtain high school diplomas. They felt that their needs as well as children's needs were being met.

School A did not really invite the community to participate in educational policy decisions. It did open its doors in other ways: its parents' room was well used; its parents' group was very active; it held a high school equivalency course during school hours for local adults; and it was consistently welcoming to parents.

There was an attempt to integrate the cultural background of its students with school learning. Some bulletin boards did feature the contributions of black and Hispanic leaders. The attitude of the black and the Hispanic paraprofessionals and aides toward the children was respectful and caring. The school's bilingual program was extensive. Even the school

office, the locale of the initial encounter of parent and school, included a Spanish speaking secretary.

Administrators and staff in School A mentioned examples of their attempts to use the talents of the community people, e.g., Puerto Rican Discovery Day was a sharing of talents between the staff, children, and parents. This was one illustration of the school's regard for the students' cultural heritage as well as recognizing the need for a broader base of participation in the teaching-learning process.

The relationships between the community and School B were not as positive. Parents and staff described the parents' group there as "weak." The principal attributed the negative feelings between the school and community to a conflict between the parents and the former principal. He said, "everyone feels the parents are on their backs." Parents said they were angry because the parents' room had been eliminated.

The study team observed several confrontations between parents and teachers. The climate seemed explosive, but the administrative staff did not appear to anticipate potential crises. Delegations of parents coming to confront the principal were not unusual, nor was it unusual to see staff insulted and harassed in School B.

School B did have a parents' group and it did hold parent workshops, but membership in it was minimal. One teacher commented that the school viewed any parental interest

in the school as an attempt at community control. The school made few efforts to address itself to the second language problem of its Hispanic population.

School Climate

School A had achieved a collaborative relationship between parents, pupils, and staff. Each of these three groups was seen as having a unique role with a set of rights and responsibilities. There was evidence that the decision-making process was a joint one.

The social climate of a "happy family" led the staff to contribute extra time, money, and even a sewing machine to the school. Staff would occasionally visit homes or stay late for parent conferences. However, there was no evidence of a great professional commitment, when measured by teachers striving to initiate teaching experiments or significant attendance at parent and community meetings.

School B was characterized by divisiveness, disorder, and disillusionment. The children tended to be hostile or timid in their relations with teachers and with the study team. The school had the air of being under attack. The insecurity of the principal was mirrored throughout the school. Teachers skirmished over assignments. Children tore down bulletin boards, dirtied the halls, and broke the windows. Parents were angry at the way their children had been treated. The district superintendent was annoyed with the number of union grievances coming to his attention.

Classroom Climate

During the period covered by the study one teacher was injured seriously enough to cause loss of time from work in School B. She was injured in breaking up one of the constant fights between students. In School A there was much less violence. In fact, during the past three years only one teacher in School A was injured in this way. One teacher in School B commented that he defined a good day as one in which no angry parent stormed into his classroom and no fist fights broke out among his students.

School A communicated to the study team that it was in control of its internal environment. Discipline was not considered a major problem by teachers in School A.

Since the major point of contact between the school and the parents is the children, the parents derived their attitudes toward the school largely from the children. Children in School A appeared to have taken home a more positive attitude in order to produce more satisfied parents than was the case in School B.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study suggest that the differences in pupils' reading achievement in these two schools were primarily attributable to administrative policies, behavior, procedures and practices. Effectiveness of teaching, training and experience of teachers, appropriateness and availability of materials, and approaches to teaching reading did not

differ significantly between the schools. The abilities of the schools' administrative teams, however, were very different. In School A, the principal and his assistant principals were able to run an orderly, peaceful and efficient school with a high degree of cooperation from pupils, teachers and parents. In this atmosphere, decisions based on educational criteria could be put in practice and children could learn more. In School B, the principal and his assistant principals had difficulty eliciting cooperation from staff, community and pupils and implementing meaningful educational policy. Children in School B had less opportunity to learn.

Administrative behavior and policies directly affected the children's education. Among these were the recruitment, placement and use of teachers and paraprofessionals, the implementation of compensatory education and establishment of sequential processes in the instructional program. Administrative policies also were a major determinant of school, classroom and community climate. Teachers' job satisfaction, parents' regard for the school, and children's willingness to participate in the school could be traced to the stability, fairness and flexibility of the administrative team. In School A, these factors were more clearly positive than in School B.

Observations of the administrative function in an inner city elementary school suggest that administrative effectiveness is the product of a team effort. Management of the school plant, supervision of the school staff,

responsibility for the student population, handling of school supplies and funds, and maintaining good relationships with both the school district and the community are important priorities for the principal.

To maintain a well run school and to be intimately involved with the instructional process and personnel may not be possible for one person; some responsibilities must be delegated. The assistant principals in School A played a major role in the instructional process. It was they who saw the teachers and classrooms daily and implemented instructional policy. In School A the assistant principals dealt with teachers and students, allowing the principal to carry out his vital managerial role.

The leadership provided by Principal A was not particularly charismatic since he was not one of those unusual leaders who would be outstanding in whatever he directed, be it a school or a corporation. Rather his competency lay in his skill in getting things done through people and he had built an administrative team with diverse skills. Also, he permitted team members to share in decision-making.

However, strength in management skills must be balanced by instructional leadership. The coherence of the reading program at School A stemmed from the efforts of the assistant principal in charge of reading. Her extensive background in reading and elementary education and her stress on the reading effort had positive results. School B had no educationally oriented assistant principals. Without administrative stimula-

tion and support, teachers worked in an intellectual vacuum, programs were fragmentary, and instructional purpose and creativity seemed to wither.

Although there was a wide range of teacher competencies in both schools, there was little evidence that the majority of the teachers understood the developmental sequence of reading, or how to teach, reinforce or assess knowledge of reading skills. This finding persisted despite the fact that the teachers were generally well educated, experienced and met New York City's licensure standards.

Some of the teachers had taken additional courses in reading, making their inability to transfer their learnings to the classroom even more of an enigma. A number of teachers lacked enthusiasm for teaching. Many said they also lacked enthusiasm for reading -- few read books for their own growth and pleasure at home. The net result was that the quality of instruction in reading in both schools was not high, which suggests that one reason children are not learning to read is that teachers need help with the teaching of reading.

Problems in teaching inner city children to read persist; as the pressure for accountability builds, the tendency for many educators and others to attribute reading failure to genetic and environmental factors becomes more prevalent. The result is low expectations for pupils, a lack of zeal, and defeatism. There is little motivation to individualize instruction or to provide for a wide spread of pupil abilities,

if student learning is judged to be beyond the school's control. Even the most able and committed teachers are being defeated by a climate which constantly communicates to them that schools cannot make a difference in changing the life chances of the poor. They watch their successes with pupils overturned by the next teacher, and their attempts to create a better learning climate stifled by an unresponsive system.

Many of the factors which support the low expectations schools hold for their students derive from institutional failures rather than from student shortcomings. The victims, the children, responded to poor teaching and irrelevant learning experiences predictably: they were apathetic, disruptive or absent.

## V. SUMMARY

The educational research which provided the framework for this study suggests no single factor could account for school effectiveness, but that a number of factors are important. The factors isolated in this study were closely related to administrative behavior, policies and practices. Thus, the crucial role played by school administrators in affecting change in pupil achievement found in these two schools was consistent with the work of Weber (1971), Clark (1972), Lutz and Evans (1968) and Levine (1966).

The Office of Education Performance Review studied in greater depth two of the 12 schools identified by the State Education Department. The findings are significantly

different. Instructional leadership provided to classroom teachers was the only variable on which there was full agreement.

In the two schools studied in depth, student populations, classroom teachers' training, experience and competency, and equipment and resources were all comparable, but the pupils of School A significantly outperformed pupils of School B on reading achievement tests. School A differed from School B in two major aspects. It had identified reading as a significant school problem and had developed a coherent plan of action to provide leadership to classroom teachers, while School B had not. School A had also succeeded in creating an atmosphere in which learning could take place, while School B had not. Administrative behavior, policies, and practices appeared to account for both of these differences. Therefore, the quality and attitude of the administration seemed to be the only real difference between the two schools.

This study has demonstrated that schools with comparable student populations and resources can produce students with significantly different reading skills. This finding demonstrates that although nonschool factors cannot be ignored, school factors can be much more significant than generally acknowledged. The stress on nonschool factors too often leads to a justification for failure which then leads educators to act as if the children cannot learn, which in turn produces the atmosphere in which the children in fact do not learn.

Thus, the prophecy that the children could not learn has become the means of fulfilling itself. It is important that educators look carefully at how schools can be used and changed to improve learning rather than to be pessimistic about their impact.

Admittedly this study has not identified all factors relating to student reading achievement. However, these preliminary findings are consistent with a significant body of other research. While more research should be encouraged, it is even more important that we begin to apply what is already known.

This study has shown that school practices have an effect on reading achievement. At the very least the children in the low achieving schools should have the opportunities available to the children of the high achieving schools. These opportunities, which do not result from higher overall expenditures, are clearly within the reach of any school today.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

## Traits and Aspects of the Four Characteristics

The following characteristics will provide an initial focus for our efforts in evaluating school policies and practices:

I. Administrative Characteristics

A. Relationships with Staff

-- Degree of power exercised in hiring staff

-- Methods used to evaluate staff

-- Degree of assistance given to teachers

-- Degree of effectiveness in supervising and training staff

-- Attitude toward promotional procedures

-- Expectations held for teachers and paraprofessionals

-- Provisions made for helping new teachers

-- Procedures used for substitutes and teacher absenteeism

-- Procedures used for conducting faculty meetings

-- Degree of control over teachers' teaching methods

B. Relationships with Pupils

-- Sensitivity and concern with human relationships

-- Expectations held for children

-- Techniques used to handle discipline

-- Effort given to coping with second language problems of students and parents

-- Efforts at reflecting pupils' culture in school displays and activities

-- Knowledge of childrens' names and families

C. Educational Philosophy and School Management

-- Specific educational philosophy held

-- Specific goals and practices in the school

-- Attitudes and practices toward tracking

-- Attitudes and practices toward homework

-- Attitudes and practices toward grading

-- Attitudes and practices toward testing

-- Attitudes and practices toward parents and community

-- Degree of concern with record keeping

-- Amount of time spent visiting classes

-- Extent of involvement in neighborhood and School Board activities

-- Degree of flexibility toward changing the school

-- Degree of efforts made to implement experimental programs

-- Attitude toward multi-approaches to teaching reading

D. Background Data

-- Age

-- Sex

-- Tenure status

-- Certification status

-- Residence

-- Education background

-- Experience

E. School Organization

-- Administrative/student ratio

-- Roles of administrative personnel

-- Deployment of personnel

-- Compensatory programs

-- Roles and use of nonclassroom personnel

## Appendix B

II. Teacher Characteristics

A. Numerical Data

-- Percentage that are bilingual (in relation to percentage of bilingual pupils in the school)

-- Percentage dismissed yearly

-- Percentage receiving unsatisfactory ratings

-- Percentage earning lowest salary and highest salary

-- Average teacher salary

-- Degree of tardiness

B. Professional Characteristics

-- Reading and language ability; type of reading done for personal pleasure and professional growth

-- Adequacy of preparation

-- Appropriateness of lessons and materials

-- Encouragement of language use between teacher and students, and among students

-- Concern with record keeping and regulations

-- Nature of relationships with colleagues

-- Attitudes and practices towards homework

-- Attitudes and practices towards grading

-- Attitudes and practices towards testing

-- Attitudes and practices towards displays

-- Particular philosophy of education

-- Specific goals for class

-- Expectations for own performance

-- Relationships and use of paraprofessionals

C. Attitudes towards pupils and parents

-- Sensitivity and concern with human relationships

-- Expectations held for children

-- Attitude toward students coming from different cultures and classes

-- Attitude and practices toward parents

-- Extent of involvement in neighborhood activities

D. Background Data

-- Racial and ethnic characteristics

-- Age

-- Tenure status

-- Certification status

-- Experience

-- Turnover

-- Residence

-- Absences

-- Educational background

## Appendix C

III. Curriculum and Instructional Methods

A. Curriculum Materials and Resources

-- Relevancy and appropriateness

-- Availability of reading resources

-- Extensiveness of materials

B. Instructional Methods

-- Approach(es) used

-- Frequency and quality of pupil evaluation

-- Evidence of enrichment

-- Range of reading instruction offered

-- Degree of individualization

-- Diagnostic skills

-- Scope and sequence

-- Creativity and resourcefulness

-- Goals and objectives

-- Effective use of pupil time

C. Organizational Factors

-- Overall school plan and philosophy for teaching reading

-- Amount of formal instructional time given to reading

-- Grouping

## Appendix D

### IV. School and Classroom Climate

#### A. Staff Morale

-- Number of staff trying to transfer out of school

-- Number of teachers who refuse assignment to school

-- Average daily absence of staff

-- Essence of faculty meetings

-- Number of teachers who stay after school day is over

#### B. Attitudinal Climate

-- Type of expectations communicated to the children by total staff of school

-- Sense of purpose that school communicates

-- Existence of racial and cultural prejudice

-- Appearance of halls, bathrooms, lunchroom, outside of building, library

-- Nature of reception of parents and outsiders who visit school

-- Quality of staff commitment to the school

#### C. School Control

-- Standards set by teachers and administrators for pupil behavior

-- Degree of adult effort put into maintaining discipline

-- Students' response to school's behavioral sanctions

-- Noise level

-- Pupil movement level within the classroom

D. Classroom Learning Climate

-- Physical appearance of classroom

-- Classroom crowding

-- Quality of learning material and displays in the classroom

-- Availability of learning materials for student use

-- Nature of classroom participation

-- General behavioral tone of class members

-- Student absenteeism

-- Teacher control